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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [KWMN](#) [SOCI](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: EXECUTIONS IN IRAQ SET TO INCREASE

REF: BAGHDAD 2055

Classified By: DCM Robert Ford for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The GOI appears set to accelerate the number of executions it carries out after the Eid holiday, having received signed death warrants from the Presidency Council for virtually all of the approximately 1,000 prisoners (including 17 women) currently sitting on death row. In a meeting on December 2, the Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Selim told Poloff that the total number of Iraqis on death row had risen by approximately 75 persons from the 925 that she had reported in July (reftel) and that the number of women on death row had increased from 12 to 17. The Minister also stated that the number of prisoners with signed death warrants had risen dramatically from only 32 in July to virtually all of the 1,000 prisoners currently on death row including all 17 women. She said that the explanation for the increase lay with Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi's decision to begin signing death warrants for Sunni prisoners over the last four months whereas he had refused to do so earlier in the year.

¶2. (C) Selim stated that to date the GOI had carried out approximately 129 executions so far in 2009 compared to none in 2008 and only 30 in 2007. All of the 129 had been executed for ordinary crimes as opposed to terrorism-related charges. Selim stated that the GOI would resume executions at the conclusion of the Eid holiday on December 3 and predicted that 100 people would be put to death in the month of December, many of them for terrorism-related offenses. She believed that the Prime Minister was feeling pressure to be seen as tough on terrorism in the wake of the August 19 and October 25 bombings and in the run-up to the elections.

¶3. (C) Selim noted that the Ministry of Human Rights had credible evidence that a number of the men on death row, including 44 associated with the Sadrist trend, had been tortured while in prison and said that she had forwarded these cases to Chief Justice Medhat for an additional review as she had done with similar cases in the past (reftel). When asked about the call for a death penalty moratorium by the head of Parliament's Legal Committee, Baha al-Araji, the Minister responded that the PM was unlikely to heed it due to political pressures he was under. Selim added that the GOI was reluctant to make public its death penalty statistics, but that the Ministry of Human Rights would be compelled to do as part of its country report submitted as part of the Universal Periodic Review to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in February 2010.

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